

TO SEE THE SECRETARY

By Katherine McDonald

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The secretary sat in his office and fumed at the heat. He was born in a Hoosier log cabin and had attended a college of the northwest. He had gone to housekeeping in a little old mossy cottage for which he found it difficult at times to pay \$8 a month rental. Yet at fifty he sat in that noble room whose long windows let in the breeze from the Potomac and framed a view in comparable for the mingling of natural and artificial beauty—sat and fumed at the heat. Williams, the messenger, entered. He was like most negroes, a sort of human barometer, and he never failed to suit his bearing to his master's humor. On this occasion he was obsequious, patient, but bored.

"That woman's still them, boss," he said.

"Didn't I tell you to get rid of her?"

"Yassah; I been tryin'," but she's a stayer. First time I done like you say—I told her 'Mr. Sec'tary's engaged.' Tell him I'll wait until she is at liberty," she say, like she de lady of the lan' herself.

Next time I say, 'Beg yo' pardon, madam, for not tellin' yo' sooner, but Mr. Sec'tary he's out,' and she look up and say, 'Tell him I'll wait until he comes in.' Yassah, she say them identical words."

"What kind of lookin' woman is she, William—young and saucy?"

"No; she gettin' long t'wa'ds middle life, sash, and she mighty shabby. Still, I ain't say but she is got a quality eye, and she do hot her head up mighty."

"Oh, well," said the secretary, with a sigh of resignation, "I'll see her and have it over."

The woman William ushered in was shabby. Not only were her clothes worn and rusty, but they had never been either fine or tasteful. Your lady in temporary straits always has some bit of faded elegance to prove that she has seen better days. This woman was clearly the habitual patron of bargain counters when she bought at all.

Still, as William had said, she carried her head high—a noble head, with bold, clear lines and mass of soft, well-kept hair. The secretary arose, and they faced each other for one silent moment, she surveying him with a calm and friendly air, he dazed by the glimmering apparition of a younger and brighter presence which came between them.

"Can this be Laura Camden?" he asked. Her eyes filled at all his tone implied. For an instant her bearing changed—she lost her courage—then she threw up her head, with a defiant laugh.

"This is all that is left of her. And is this Tom Lloyd?" She swept the room with a calculating glance. It was as if she estimated the cost of the massive table and rich chairs. Instantly she turned her eyes back upon the secretary as if to measure him.

He flushed and rallied.

"Yes; this is Tom Lloyd, the fellow you wouldn't have, you know."

"Well," she laughed impenitently, then sank into the chair nearest her and ran a furtive, appreciative finger over the tapestry covering.

"You married Tucker Barton?" he asked.

"Oh, yes! And he turned out as every one predicted. I look the character, don't I—a drunkard's widow who has neither hope nor pride left?"

Her voice rang clear—no tremor of self pity, no note of shame or appeal.

"By Jove," the secretary said to himself, "this is Laura, and she's got the old spirit in her still!"

"Can I do anything for you?" he asked.

"Why, yes, if you will. Of course I didn't come merely to call—or to recall. I want a place in one of the departments."

"What kind of a place?"

"I'm not particular," she said coolly. "You know very well I have neither talent nor training. You will have to treat me as if I were a political henchman and find me something which will require neither. I could keep accounts, but I think I should like to be in the library. There is a ladies' room, you know, as well as women attendants."

"But that is such a menial place."

She spread out her hands, brown and knotted and calloused. He drew back in a sort of shame and would have hidden his own had he dared. They were too white and soft and prosperous to lie in full sight on the table before her.

"The wages are small—not more than \$60 or \$75 a month."

"Not more!" She looked at him with glittering eyes. Her voice trembled now and seemed to express want and despair and resentment together. "Tom Lloyd! Sixty dollars a month—every month? That would be riches to me!"

He shrank back in the chair. "Laura," he said, "why have you never come before? You live in Washington, and you might have come. Any time in the last ten years I've been here."

"Oh, yes, I know—Congressman Lloyd, Senator Lloyd, Secretary Lloyd. And I have, as you say, been here all the time. I've wanted to come, but she wouldn't let me."

"She?"

"Laura—Laura Camden, the girl you knew. She was always throwing it up to me that things might have been different." She fingered the tassels of the chair, and she dropped her eyes with the timidity of a girl.

The secretary's heart beat fast. He leaned toward her and spoke softly. "Yes, you might have been the wife of the secretary of the navy by now, Laura." She tossed her head in her old

impudent way and looked straight into his suffused eyes.

"I should not," she said. "If I had married you, Tom Lloyd, you wouldn't have been sitting here today."

"Why not?" he asked, with a sense of offense.

"Oh, because"—she leaned closer—"if you had married me you shouldn't have a mere secretary at fifty. You would have been president!"

He looked at her and answered with quiet conviction:

"Yes; I should have been president with you to inspire me."

"I should never have done it by inspiration, Tom. I should have kept you at it and I never would have let you think well of yourself so long as there was another man ahead of you." She arose, and, taking up her shabby umbrella and imitation leather bag as if to go, she returned to the subject of the appointment.

"Am I to have that place, then—chambermaid or scrubwoman or ladies' attendant, whichever you call it—at the library?" As he hesitated her features seemed to sharpen with anxiety. "Oh, Tom," she pleaded, "if you can get it for me, don't refuse! I have mother to take care of, and she is paralyzed, and there is so little I can do to earn a living!"

She swayed against the table; then, suddenly recovering her pride and courage again, she continued in a tone of calm politeness:

"I am sorry to have troubled you, Mr. Secretary. Of course there are many who appeal to you even on the strength of old and forgotten friendships." She turned toward the door with certain grace and dignity which brought an indulgent smile to the secretary's lips. He sprang up and stepped quickly in front of her.

"This is not a case of forgotten friendship. Laura, I have never forgotten, never wished to forget, but you can't have that place. It doesn't suit you. There is another opening, one in which you can be of much greater service. I do so want to be president. Won't you undertake to make one of me, Laura?"

She turned her back upon him and clutched the table with her work-marrred hands.

"No, Tom; I won't. Don't ask me. If you were poor and all worn out and broken down by life or if we could go back to your youth!"

"Laura, I've always suspected that you regretted that old decision. I've thought a good many times that if I had asked again that next summer at camp meeting you wouldn't have given the same answer." He came around the table and compelled her to face him.

"Would you, Laura?"

"What does it matter now? I married Tucker and managed to conquer my love for you and now—"

"Your love for me! There! I have thought that admission a good many times in my life, Laura, and I've got it. If you loved me once, you can again."

"Oh, well," she laughed, but her voice trembled, "I should like to see you president, Tom, after all!"

Trajan's Floating Palace.

Marcus Ulpius Nerva Trajanus, the Trajan of Roman biography and one of Rome's most renowned emperors, constructed or was responsible for the construction of three of the most remarkable works of the early years of the Christian era—Trajan's column, Trajan's wall and Trajan's floating palace. History is full of accounts concerning the two former, but the last seems to have been pretty generally overlooked by the early as well as the later gleaners of rare and curious information. The monk Bartemius who mentions it in his "Ecclesiastes," says that it was constructed and purposely sunken in Lake Nemi, an arch tunnel allowing communication with the shore. In this case it would certainly have gone into history as "Trajan's sunken palace" instead of "floating palace."

It is generally believed, Bartemius to the contrary, that it was originally an imperial palace intended for the use of the emperor and his family during their summer excursions on Lake Nemi.

Another faction of antiquarians are of the opinion that it was not built during the lifetime of Trajan. Southwick says that it was sunk in the year 185 A. D., seventy-eight years after the death of the emperor for which it was named.

Marchi, who explored it in a diving suit on July 15, 1853, declared it to be in a good state of preservation; also that it was 500 feet long, 270 feet in breadth and 60 feet deep.

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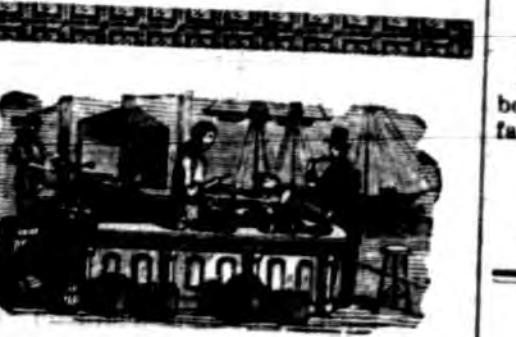
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